

GALATIANS PART 13

GAL. 4.1-7

In chapter 3, Paul has defined the gospel of grace – the subject he continues to address in chapter 4.

It was designed before the creation of the world and revealed through the promise God made to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his seed – a reference Paul explained to Jesus Christ – so that all who are of faith are the true sons of Abraham.

Paul has reminded the Galatian believers as well as the church today that all men are sinners by birth and can never achieve a glory that is comparable to that of God and are incapable of entering into the presence of God's glory because of their sinful nature.

God gave the Law of Moses to remind men of their sinful nature and that there could be no reconciliation, no justification, no salvation found in the Law, for men who live under the Law also live under the curse of the Law – the penalty of death.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might be delivered to men of all nations.

God gave the Law to serve as a prison and as a prison guard, keeping in custody those who lived under the law until the freedom of faith could arrive to deliver them.

God gave the Law to serve as a corrective and disciplinary governor – as an oppressive disciplinary measure that was designed to make the promised blessings of the Messiah all the more desirable.

There is no natural break in the letter between chapters 3 & 4. Paul simply continues his discussion of the purpose and function of the Law and how the Law relates to grace.

In Roman culture, a child who was less than 17 or 18 was considered a minor. As a minor, he could inherit the property and wealth of his parents, but he could not exercise any control over that wealth nor could he have any direct access to it until he reached the age of majority.

No matter how wealthy he was in financial terms, since the estate was controlled completely by guardians and trustees, the child was really no different than a slave.

Both his person and his property were under the control of others until he reached the age of 18 or until he reached the time fixed by his father.

Under the Law, Israel was like a minor child, heir to the promise of Abraham, but bound by the Law until the designated time when the promise was fulfilled.

The Law was hard and stringent with rules and requirements for “sacrifices, ceremonies, and observances” along with penalties for any violation of the Law. This was the time when Israel was under the watchcare, the tutelage, or the custody of the Law for the purpose of training and discipline and spiritual development in preparation for the day when the child would be declared a man – when the promise made to Abraham would be fulfilled in the coming of the Son of God.

Remember that Paul is addressing two groups by his letter: the wayward Galatian believers who came from a non-Jewish background, and the Jewish false teachers.

In these first seven verses, Paul is speaking to all men, but primarily to the Jews. That is why in verse 3, he uses the pronoun “we.”

It was to Israel that God gave the Law and Israel is the minor child who was meant to inherit the wealth of blessing associated with the promise to Abraham.

Read verse 3

The phrase “elements of this world” or “principles of this world” does not mean that God has left His people to fend for themselves against the world or to find answers to life’s questions with worldly knowledge.

This phrase is a reference to the continuing child-like nature of Israel under the Law. The word “element” or “principle” refers to all the building blocks of learning.

The Law was like learning the alphabet and how to count – the basics of reading, writing, and computing – all in preparation for graduation into the working world of mature individuals.

He will use a similar reference in verse 9...**Read**

Verse 4***The fullness of time...***

One meaning of this phrase is a reference to that time of maturity or majority mentioned in the earlier verses when the child is declared an adult and all of the wealth and riches and property associated with his inheritance becomes his to own.

It is the time of maturity appointed by the Father.

Everything in time and history were exactly right according to God’s overall plan for the coming of the Messiah and the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

Questions:

- Why at that time in history? Why not sooner?
- Why allow men to struggle through 4000 plus years before sending the Savior?
- Why didn’t God grant redemption immediately after the fall of Adam?

There are no real answers to these questions that will ever be able to satisfy those whose hearts are not granted the faith of Jesus Christ.

For those who do know Christ, the answer is that God – who is infinite and eternal and in the process of carrying out a plan that required time, space, and matter to accomplish – is about the business of fulfilling that plan.

As a result, He had reasons for delaying Christ’s coming which we can never see or comprehend this side of eternity.

When and if we ever know God’s reasons, we will understand and approve all that God has done as well as the manner in which He achieved it.

Understanding the concept of “the fullness of time” is directly related to our understanding of the person and the sovereign will of God.

We tend to think of time in terms of the moment we are in or of the moments that have passed.

We are hopeful when things are going well and depressed or fearful when we are facing conflict or when we consider our past and think of all our failures and the things that might have been.

We tend to think of time as a continuum along which space and matter are traveling.

So we think of God who, in an effort to arrest the destructive outcome resulting from man’s desire to control his own destiny, took a drastic step and interjected His own will into time – sending the Son to redeem a fallen and rebellious out-of-control creation before it self-destructed.

But we need to be reminded that nothing is out of God’s control. He does not react. He designs and controls all things. Redemption was not an afterthought, but the perfect design of God.

We tend to think of Christ as Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end – who came into the middle of time to serve as the Savior of the world.

We seldom, if ever, think of Christ, not just as the beginning and the end, but as all of the time in between.

Remember that Christ created time and defines it and determines its boundaries. Thus He is not limited to it, nor is He required to work within its boundaries.

Instead of thinking of time in terms of today being used up to become yesterday, we should keep our minds focused on Christ and see each moment as a new creation flowing from God in the continuous revelation of His perfect will.

Christ did not just come in the fullness of time – He is the fullness of time.

All that took place in history before Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was prophetic of His coming the first time.

And all that is happening now or will ever happen is in anticipation of His second coming.

Jesus did not just come in the fullness of time, but all of time is fulfilled in Him. He is the reason for the creation and the existence of time.

We are created for **His** glory and for His purposes – not Him for ours.

God sent forth His Son...

The words here refer to the act of one who send another with a commission to do something acting upon the authority of the sender.

It is the source of our word "apostle."

Heb. 3.1 Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession,

Jesus delivered in person the message – the good news – the gospel of grace through faith.

Born of a woman...

Jesus is God incarnate – God in the flesh.

His existence did not have a beginning. He was never created as the JW's teach, and He did not become our Savior at His birth. He has always been.

Read Daniel 7.13-14

Born under the Law...

At His birth to Mary, Jesus came to earth to live as a man, formed under the Law and in subjection to all of the demands, restrictions, and requirements of the Law.

He kept the Law perfectly and thus was worthy to be the sacrifice sufficient to atone for all sin and by doing so, remove the penalty of the Law, redeeming the saved from any claims the Law may have on them because of sin.

In verse 5...***read***

Paul says that now we are sons – fully capable of not only possessing the promised wealth of God's grace, but free to apply it and to benefit from all that is associated with it...

- Salvation
- Eternal life
- Access to the throne through prayer

Read 1 Peter 1.3-5

All of these things are great, but the greatest gift of all we see in...

Verse 6...**Read**

As sons, we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts with the result that we cannot help but worship the Father because we are so readily aware of the intimate relationship that has been established.

God is not just creator and judge and law-giver, but He is Father – He is Abba Father – a term unique to the relationship between a father and his children.

Read Romans 8.15-17**Read verse 7**

There is reason to celebrate because we are no longer minor children, but full-grown sons, free from the confinement of the Law with its requirements for performance.

The religion that satisfies God is not found in rituals and feasts and sacrifices.

God is so much more concerned with the inward working of the Holy Spirit as He conforms us – transforms us – into the image of the Son.

...than He is about our pious performances of singing, worship attendance, and ministry.

God does not need any of these things. He does not even need us.

But we desperately need Him and all that He has to offer in the way of transformation.

Salvation is not found in forms of religion, but in the faith of Jesus Christ.

God's goal in our salvation is not works, but worship.

And we are free to worship Him in spirit and in truth because of His gift of grace and faith.